

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Interagency Council on Homelessness



Notes from the Meeting of the Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH)

Date and Time: February 25, 2009; 2 pm to 3:30 pm

Location: N Street Village, 1333 N Street, NW

Approximate Attendance: 87

An agenda was distributed.

Welcome and Introductions

Dan Tangherlini, City Administrator (CA) called the meeting to order, stated that an agenda was available, and then opened the meeting for comments from the public.

Public Comment Period

- A resident of 801 East spoke about residents of the District needing assistance with public housing.
- A speaker who is new to the District and jobless said that she had problems with immigration and a family law matter to settle. She is now a resident of Luther Place, but she was originally from the Soviet Union. She said that there was a “bloated bureaucracy” and an “artificial situation” here with respect to homelessness. She believed that the [National] Alliance to End Homelessness was the most important group involved in dealing with this issue. She believed that controls on the pricing of apartments and other living accommodations (rental controls) were solutions to homelessness.
- A speaker who identified himself as Mr. Embden spoke of the changing face of homelessness. He said that employment should be emphasized.
- A speaker, who said that he had been homeless since the year 2000, stated that better education of the homeless community about services is needed as well as better outreach and communication.
- A speaker who was a stroke victim stated that priority in housing should be given to those who have had strokes. This includes both DCHA housing and Housing First placements.
- The final speaker was skeptical of the value to the homeless community of the services offered by the Metropolitan Police Department and the Department of Mental Health.

Summary of the Discussion from the Pre-Meeting Focus Groups

- A focus group (round table) was held prior to the ICH meeting so that key issues could be discussed in some detail by members of the homeless community with the findings or conclusions of the discussions presented to the subsequent ICH meeting. This input is sought in order to inform the planning process of the ICH and its committees.

- Participants were asked to reflect on specific questions or topics and to offer their input and perspectives through both small group conversations and in written comments. These questions were discussed today:
 - 1. a.) What should an array of available homeless prevention and rapid re-housing services look like? (Participants were asked to check items in a list and identify the top three.)
 - 1. b.) Who should be able to access homeless prevention and rapid re-housing services?
 - 1. c.) Should there be any residency requirement?
 - 2. a.) As a prevention measure, should there be an intervention with an assessment and access to services before an individual has to enter a homeless shelter?
 - 2. b.) A recent Urban Institute study showed that the majority of people stay less than 2 weeks in shelter in the District. Would it make sense to intervene during this 2 week period to assess housing barriers that individuals have and to introduce services to overcome these barriers?
 - 2. c.) Should the intervention operate through the shelters or some other agency? If you believe that another agency should be involved, please specify the agency or agencies.
 - 3. a.) Should we have time limited (rental) subsidies?
 - 3. b.) If so, who should qualify?
 - 3. c.) What should the size of the subsidy be? (30% of income, fixed dollar amount, full rent)
- There were approximately forty participants in three facilitated sub-groups. Each question was discussed for about fifteen minutes, and summaries of the conversations, input, and ideas generated were given at intervals by each group.
- Laura Zeilinger, Deputy Director for Program Operations at the Department of Human Services (DHS), gave a summary of the results of the discussions to the assembled ICH. Also, the output from this pre-meeting session was summarized in a document that is available on the [ICH website](#) or by contacting [George Shepard](#) (DHS) at (202) 576-9159 or at george.shepard@dc.gov.
- A collateral discussion was initiated by Cheryl Barnes during which she expressed concern about why certain persons are in the shelter system, namely, individuals with adequate income, persons with disabilities, and seniors, some of whom had been in the shelter system for five years or more. Mr. Swan, Administrator of the Family Services Administration (FSA) of DHS, said that we do not collect a great deal of detailed information on those who use the shelter system. Ms. Barnes noted that case managers should have information about their clients that would assist in identifying those who may be eligible for or able to live in another placement. Clarence Carter, Director of DHS, and Mr. Tangherlini both said that more useful client information will be uncovered as we continue to transform and modify the system.

ICH Committee Reports

Steering Committee – Scott McNeilly, Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless (WLCH)

- The 2009 meeting schedule for the ICH was presented and distributed. It may be viewed at www.ich.dc.gov.
- New ICH appointees will be sworn in soon, and we will produce an updated contact list.
- The Steering Committee continues to be concerned about the coordination of committee functions and the structure of ICH committees. It wants to seek ways to ensure better coordination and communications among the ICH committees and any subcommittees that are formed.

Operations and Logistics Committee – Chapman Todd, Catholic Charities

- The interagency coordination of activities and services to support the Presidential Inauguration on January 20, 2009 was an unprecedented and successful collaborative effort. The ICH played a major part in the planning and execution of this significant quadrennial event.
- The committee continues to seek data on administrative reviews from the Office of Administrative Hearings. Scott McNeilly, WLCH, is the point person for this effort.
- The committee continues to monitor the hypothermia plan and collateral activities, and it reviews issues as they arise. There has been some concern about capacity for men, and modifications were made by DHS to deal with the demand.
- This committee continues to study discharge planning. The intention is to focus on the health and safety issues involved by examining discharges from jails, prisons, and hospitals. As a result of a meeting with the DC Hospital Association (DCHA) at the end of 2008, the DCHA has agreed to restart a committee to deal with this issue.
- Housing is a necessary resource in successful discharge planning, and it was noted that the Urban Institute will host a forum on March 16 during which housing options for those returning from incarceration will be discussed. See the Urban Institute website at www.urban.org under “Browse by Author/Sam Hall” for more information. Also, George Shepard, Policy Analyst at DHS, has additional information on this topic. Contact him at (202) 576-9159 or at george.shepard@dc.gov.
- The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) now has a free housing locator service, DCHousingSearch.org, for individuals looking for housing and for property owners and managers that want to list available dwellings located in the District of Columbia, according to DHCD Director Leila Finucane Edmonds. This locator also has an affordability calculator available.
- Michael Ferrell, Executive Director of the Coalition for the Homeless, said that the Washington Area Housing Partnership, an affiliate of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, has a “Toolkit for Affordable Housing” available on its website at www.wahpdc.org. The toolkit has information about best practices, and it may be found under “Publications.” There are also toolkits for affordable housing advocacy and development among other interesting and germane items on this site.
- Ms. Barnes inquired about the threshold cost of “affordable housing.” Mr. Todd responded that the answer was complicated. He said that a rule of thumb is that housing should cost no more than 30% of one’s yearly income.

Strategic Planning Committee – Clarence Carter, Director, DHS

- Mr. Carter noted that the Strategic Planning Committee is a multi-disciplinary team seeking ways to end homelessness. The work continues by identifying policy objectives, constituencies that we are to serve, and service strategies across seven dimensions. The dimensions are: Available to All, Mental Health, Substance Abuse, Domestic Violence, Employment, Discharge Planning, and Healthcare/HIV. The constituencies are individual men, women, and youth; families; seniors; veterans; and ex-offenders.
- The committee is meeting with organizations that serve the particular populations that will be included in the plan in order to get the benefit of their expertise and to ensure that we are proceeding in the right direction based on the unique needs of each population group.
- We will incorporate plans from other agencies, such as the Department of Mental Health (DMH), as appropriate and as those plans are found to enhance the overall efficacy and reach of the strategic plan.

Discussion of FY 2010 Budget Matters and Issues that Impact Homeless Services, Various Discussants

- In FY 2009, DHS used a combination of local and federal (TANF) funds to support homeless services. The local funding totaled \$55 million for shelter, transportation, permanent supportive housing, prevention, crisis services, security, case management, and outreach. For FY 2010, we should have federal stimulus funding that will provide opportunities to achieve synergy and build capacity. Ms. Barnes asked for a breakdown of the budget by line item, and she was directed to the website budget.dc.gov for this information.
- Stephen T. Baron, Director of the Department of Mental Health (DMH), spoke next and said that 3,000 individuals who are homeless enter the mental health system annually at a cost of about \$3,200.00 each. He provided a one page handout showing a variety of mental health services for the homeless, the FY 2009 budget expenditures, and the number of consumers served. He said that local funds are used for outreach, housing subsidies, shelter plus care expenditures, and eviction prevention.
- The Office of Property Management (OPM) operates fourteen shelters with a total of 460,000 square feet, and the cost is nearly \$2 million annually. This does not include the security coverage given by the Protective Services Division (PSD) of OPM.
- Other ICH members will present at a future meeting.
- Revenue projections for the District are reported to be down, and a shortfall is expected. See “Projected Revenue Down \$500 Million” (Nakamura and Stewart, *Washington Post*, February 25, 2009; B3) and “In Downturn, D.C. Fears Lost Revenue In Tax Appeals” (Nakamura and Stewart, *Washington Post*, February 26, 2009; B1).

Update on the Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) Initiative – Fred Swan, Administrator, Family Services Administration, DHS

- The purpose of PSH is to move those who are homeless into housing with supportive services using a “housing first” approach. The first step to join the program was to

complete an assessment, and we have assessments for 3,100 individuals and 360 families in our database at present.

- To date, 414 individuals have been housed under this initiative. Those who are housed have been assigned case managers from among six case management providers under contract. There are five individuals in accessible housing units.
- We have housed our first family, and we will house a total of 80 families this fiscal year. To participate, a family must come through the Virginia Williams Family Resource Center (VWFRC) where members are assessed using a vulnerability assessment instrument similar to the one used for individuals. The survey has additional sections that cover trauma, domestic violence, and CFSA involvement. The families receive a vulnerability score based on the assessment, they are prioritized, case managers are assigned, and then placement in housing follows.
- This program has slowed down somewhat because we are using vouchers and not local funds.

Report on the Super NOFA Award, Darlene Mathews, Deputy Director for Policy and Programs, The Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness (TCP)

- This is an award from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for homeless programs that TCP coordinates in the District. The 2009 award was for \$19.6 million, an increase of \$2 million over last year.
- It will fund 61 existing housing programs and two new permanent housing programs for the chronically homeless. The two new programs will have a total of 50 slots.
- D.C. also received \$1.86 million in rapid housing funds for a pilot program to house 50 families who are now in emergency shelter.
- Ms. Mathews distributed a one page handout.

Discussion of the Economic Stimulus Package and its Impact on Prevention and Rehousing, Nan Roman, President and CEO of the National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH)

- Ms. Roman distributed a handout showing provisions of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act that affect housing and poverty and FY 2009 appropriations in an omnibus spending bill that Congress is currently considering.

Overview of the Activities of the Coalition of Housing and Homeless Organizations (COHHO), Skip Watkins and Nechama Masliansky

- The representatives from COHHO distributed a one page handout, and gave a short presentation. They said that this organization performs diverse functions including, among others, advocacy, policy development, resource coordination, and networking.

Public Comment Period

- A speaker asked if we knew how many people were homeless, and said that we do not know how to help them. The speaker continued by insisting that we go into the shelters to

find out what is needed. To deal with homelessness, we need apartments, training, and an end to 12 hour shelters. The speaker found services and stability at CCNV.

- The next speaker said that the stimulus funds are to keep people in their homes. The funds are not for those who are homeless. Résumés and jobs are what are needed for the homeless community.
- The next speaker expressed appreciation for what the agencies and service providers do. The speaker said that communications are problematic. Those who are homeless need to be better informed about the services that are available. Miriam's Kitchen has a notebook with many services listed so that those who are in need are able to find appropriate services by using this reference book. The speaker said that all shelters should have this type of resource and that there should be "one stop shopping" in the shelters for information about services.
- The next speaker said that she had certain medical problems and that she needed a bed for the upcoming evening. She was assisted by George Shepard of DHS and Kenyatta Brunson of Catholic Charities.
- The final speaker said that the shelters should be open 24 hours, that mental health services are needed, and that we should use an "undercover" resident to report on conditions.

Adjournment

- After the public comment period, Mr. Tangherlini adjourned the meeting.

This concludes the notes from the session.

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Next Meetings

- Wednesday, April 22, 2009 at Harriet Tubman Women's Center, Building 9, DC General Campus, 1900 Massachusetts Avenue, SE from 2 to 3: 30 pm. The pre-meeting roundtable session will take place from 12:30 pm to 1:30 pm.
- Thursday, June 18, 2009 at Thrive DC (formerly Dinner Program for Homeless Women or DPHW), 309 E Street, NE from 2 to 3: 30 pm. The pre-meeting roundtable session will take place from 12:30 pm to 1:30 pm.
- Thursday, August 20, 2009 at Church of the Epiphany, 1317 G Street, NW from 2 to 3: 30 pm. The pre-meeting roundtable session will take place from 12:30 pm to 1:30 pm.
- Thursday, October 22, 2009 at Miriam's Kitchen, 2401 Virginia Avenue, NW, from 2 to 3: 30 pm. The pre-meeting roundtable session will take place from 12:30 to 1:30 pm.
- Thursday, December 17, 2009 at a location to be determined from 2 to 3: 30 pm. The pre-meeting roundtable session will take place from 12:30 pm to 1:30 pm.

Meeting dates and times are subject to change.

Date of this document: April 17, 2009